



Watertown City Council Committee on Public Works

Councilor Piccirilli-Chair, Councilor Feltner-Vice Chair, Councilor Palomba- Secretary

Committee Report of December 15, 2025 Meeting Presented to the City Council on January 13, 2026

Meeting of the Committee on Public Works on Monday, December 15, 2025 at 6:00 PM in the City Council Chambers with zoom capacity. Public comments could be submitted to apalomba@watertown-ma.gov.

Purpose of the meeting was to review and make recommendations on the Hazard Mitigation Action Plan (Plan).

Present: Councilors Vincent Piccirilli, Lisa Feltner, and Anthony Palomba, Committee on Public Works, Fire Chief Ryan Nicholson, Watertown Fire Department, Martin Pillsbury, Senior Environmental Planner and Jennifer Mallitsch, Emergency Preparedness Specialist, Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), and Eugenie Johnston and Libby Shaw from Trees for Watertown. Also, on zoom were residents Donald MacDonald, E.B. Dussan, Fritz Smith, and Maria Pia Sanchez. Councilor Palomba reported that there were no emails submitted to the Committee prior to the meeting.

Chief Nicholson introduced Mr. Pillsbury and Ms. Mallitsch from the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), who reviewed a slide show presentation, **“Watertown Hazard Mitigation Plan Update – Public Meeting #1” (Presentation)**. The Presentation is attached.

Highlights from the Presentation

- The Federal Mitigation Act administrated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)) provides guidelines for local Plans that are to address resilience before a disaster. Watertown’s Plan is updated every 5 years with revised data and community priorities. Approved Plans are required for a city or town to be eligible for FEMA mitigation grants.
- The focus of the Plan is to reduce “impacts of natural hazards through strategies including policy, projects and programs”. The Plan answers the questions: What preventative actions are being taken now to reduce risks and damages? and What additional actions can be taken in the future to increase resilience? A Plan would address some or all of the following: flooding, wind events, winter hazards, geologic hazards, wild fires, and extreme temperatures and drought.
- One of the goals of a Plan is to break the cycle of “Disaster, Rebuild, Disaster, Rebuild”. In doing this it is important to use well established techniques for hazard mitigation including prevention, property protection, public education, protection of natural resources, structural projects, and emergency services protection.
- It is important to recognize that a form of hazard mitigation is “adapting to the expected impacts of climate change”.
- MAPC has created a public survey to elicit information from the Watertown residents which will be publicized via the City’s local media platforms and the City’s weekly “What’s Up Watertown” newsletter. The survey is attached. They have also created a Hazard Identification and Mapping tool and conducted an Assessment of Risks & Vulnerabilities.

- This meeting in front of the Committee on Public Works is the first public meeting where initial information was presented. MAPC will prepare a Draft Plan and present it for feedback at meetings of Watertown's Local Team which includes representatives from the following City Departments – Planning, Health, Fire, Police, and Public Works.
- The Presentation included information that will be used in preparing the draft Plan such as a review of City facilities, the City's infrastructure, and community facilities, examples of local hazard areas in the City, and examples of existing mitigation measures.
- The Presentation also listed Next Steps which included: a final meeting with the Local Team in January, a second public meeting which would be a City Council meeting most likely in March at which time the members of the Council and the public can comment on the draft Plan, a Finalized Plan that will be available on-line for additional public comment, submission of the Finalized Plan to the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) and FEMA in April, and eventual adoption of the Final Plan by the City.

Following the presentation members of the Committee had a few clarifying questions and residents spoke about the value of trees as a source of heat mitigation and the relationship between avian influenza and flooding.

Councilor Feltner made the following motion:

The Committee Public Works requests that the City Council President schedule an informational presentation allowing public comment of the draft MAPC plan at a future City Council meeting.

The motion was seconded by Councilor Palomba and passed 3 – 0. The meeting adjourned at 6:57 PM and the minutes were prepared by Councilor Palomba

Watertown Hazard Mitigation Plan Update

Public Meeting #1

December 15, 2025

Watertown Public Works Committee

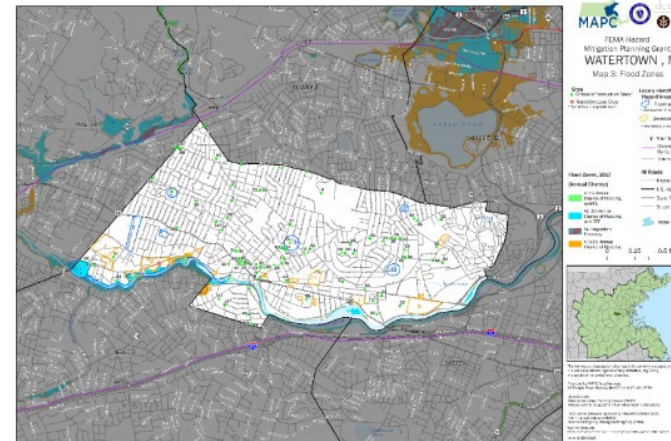
Martin Pillsbury and Jenifer Wallitsch
Metropolitan Area Planning Council

Background: Hazard Mitigation

Overview of Hazard Mitigation Planning

- **Disaster Mitigation Act:**
FEMA guidelines for local Hazard Mitigation Plans
- **Pre-Disaster Mitigation:** plan for resilience before disaster
- **5-year plan update cycle:**
Update plan data and community priorities
- **FEMA grant eligibility:**
Approved plan required for FEMA mitigation grants

TOWN OF WATERTOWN HAZARD MITIGATION PLAN 2019 UPDATE



MAPC 50 YEARS
METROPOLITAN AREA PLANNING COUNCIL
SMART GROWTH AND REGIONAL COLLABORATION

FINAL PLAN
Approved by FEMA
May 8, 2019

Overview of Hazard Mitigation Planning

Reducing impacts of natural hazards through strategies including policy, projects, and programs.

1. What preventative actions are being taken **now** to reduce risks and damages?
2. What **additional** actions can be taken in the future to increase resilience?

A plan for Multiple Natural Hazards



Flooding (coastal and inland)



Wind events (thunderstorms, hurricanes, tornadoes)



Winter hazards (blizzards, nor'easters)



Geologic hazards (earthquakes, landslides)



Wild Fires



Extreme temperatures and drought

Breaking the Cycle of Disaster & Rebuilding



Techniques for Hazard Mitigation

Prevention (*planning and zoning*)

Property Protection (*building elevation*)

Public Education (*public outreach*)

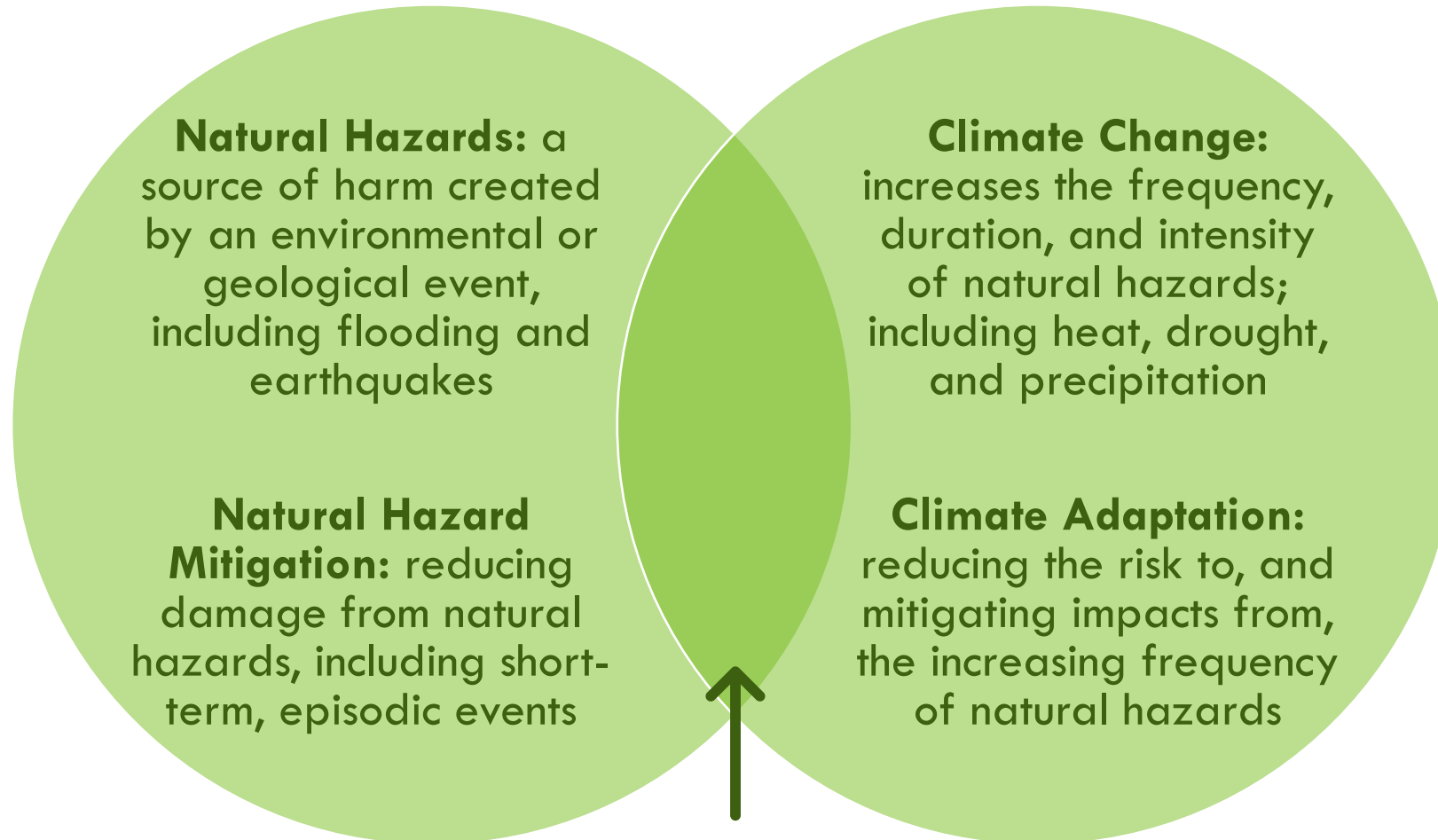
Protect Natural Resources (*wetlands, floodplains*)

Structural Projects (*culverts, pumps, dams*)

Emergency Services Protection
(*protection of emergency facilities & infrastructure*)



Natural Hazards and Climate Change



Adapting to the expected impacts of climate change is a form of hazard mitigation

The Planning Process

Plan Development Process



Process Guided by the Local Hazard Mitigation Team

Local Team Role:

- Participate in four meetings
- Establish and endorse project goals
- Provide updated data and local expertise
- Finalize mitigation actions for the final plan

Representatives from:

- Planning Department
- Health Department
- Fire Department
- Police Department
- Public Works Department

What We've Heard

What We've Heard: Examples of Critical Facilities & Infrastructure

Municipal Facilities

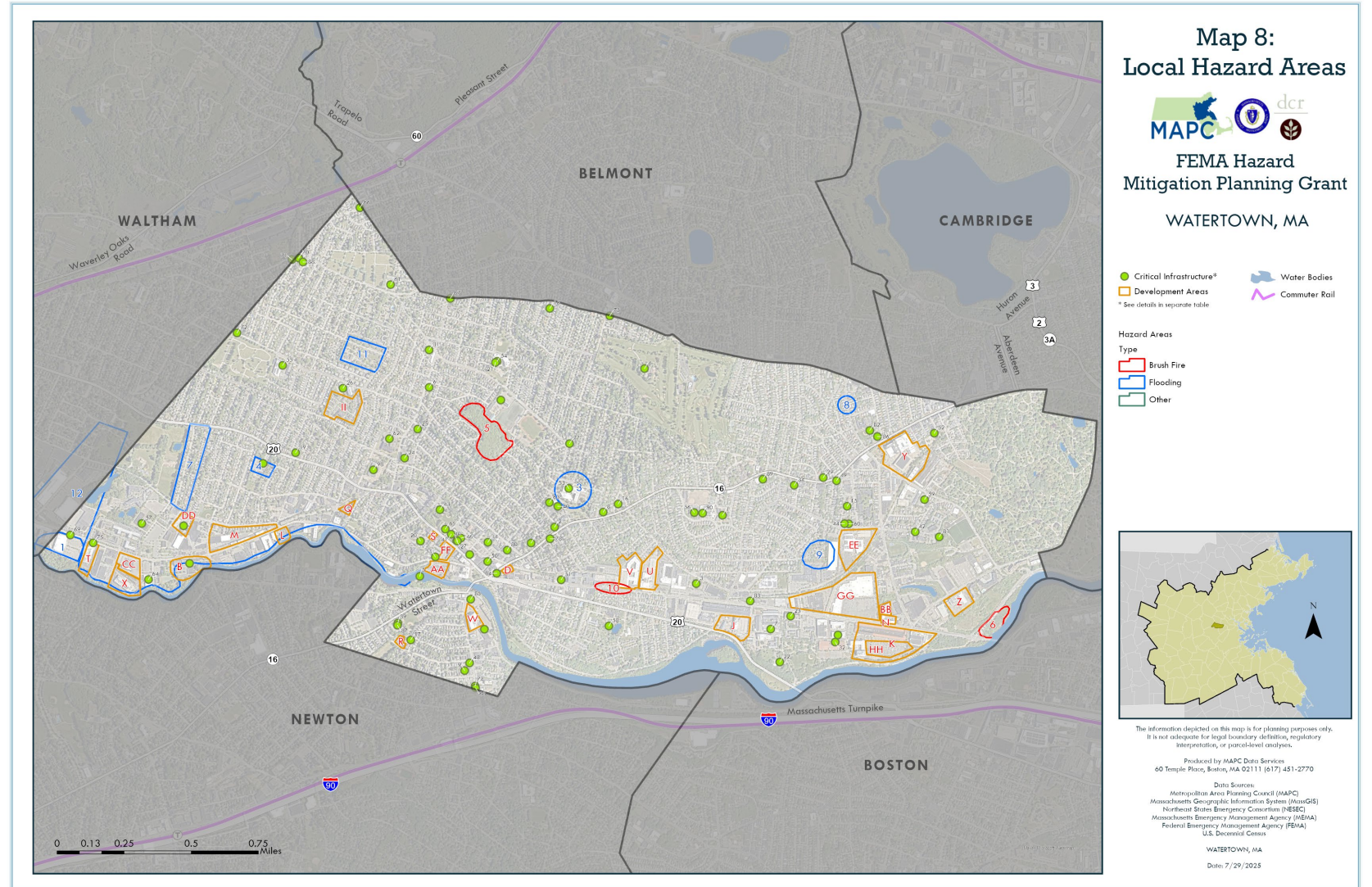
- City Hall
- Fire Station
- Police Station

Infrastructure

- Power Stations
- Watertown Dam

Community Facilities

- Watertown Schools
- Places of Worship
- Medical Facilities
- Places of Assembly



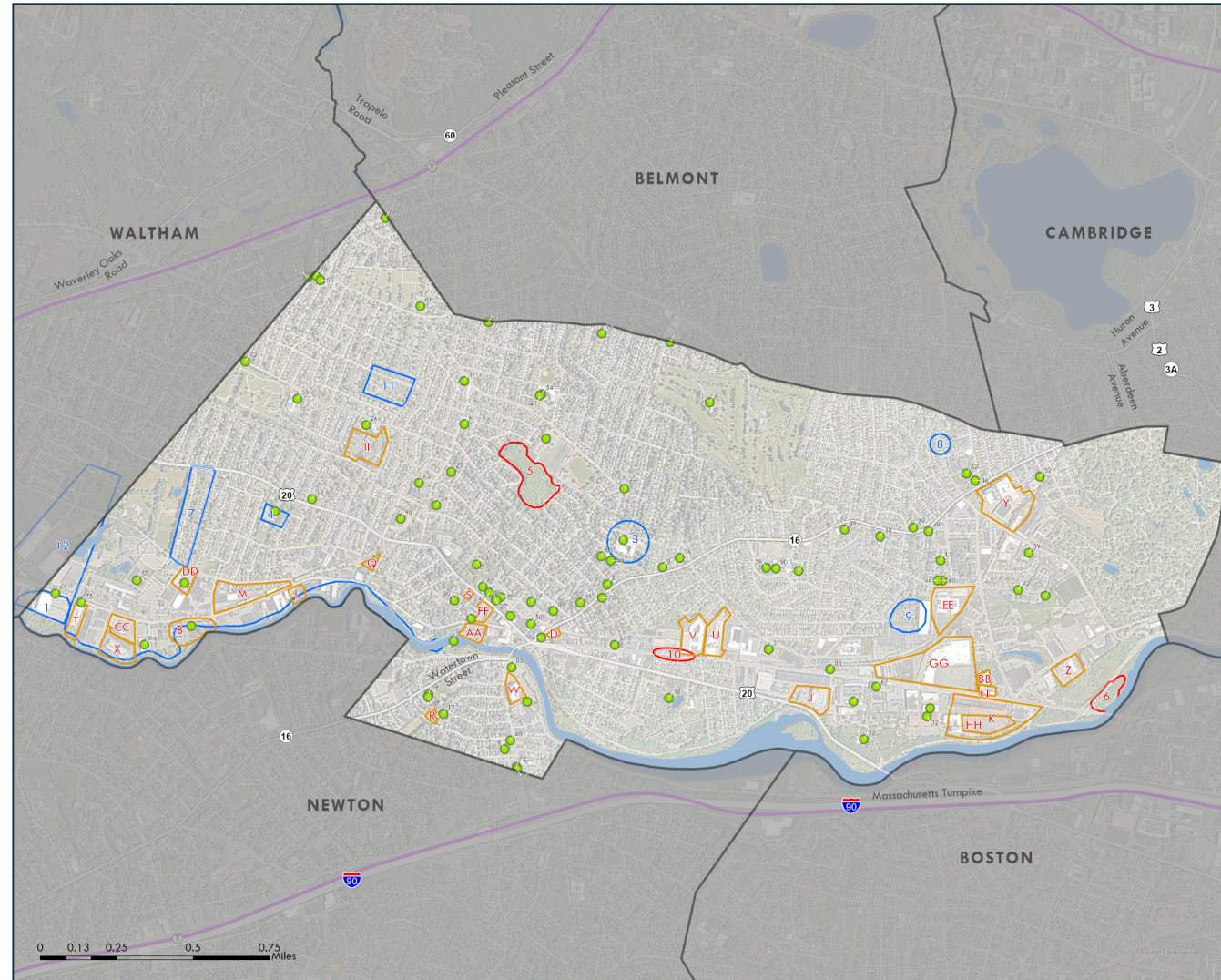
What We've Heard: Examples of Local Hazard Areas

Flooding areas:

- Rutland St
- New Police Headquarters
- Arlington St and Keith St
- Lauren St, Melendy Ave, and Oak St
- Charles River Banks

Other Hazards:

- **Brushfire hazard** at Whitney Hill, Wooded area off of Greenough Blvd, and Bike Path along Arsenal St and Pleasant St



Map 8:
Local Hazard Areas



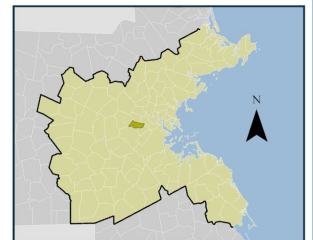
FEMA Hazard
Mitigation Planning Grant

WATERTOWN, MA

- Critical Infrastructure*
 - Development Areas
 - Water Bodies
 - Commuter Rail
- * See details in separate table

Hazard Areas

- Type
- Brush Fire
 - Flooding
 - Other



The information depicted on this map is for planning purposes only. It is not adequate for legal boundary definition, regulatory interpretation, or parcel-level analyses.

Produced by MAPC Data Services
60 Temple Place, Boston, MA 02111 (617) 451-2770

Data Sources:
Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC)
Massachusetts Geographic Information System (MassGIS)
Northeast States Emergency Consortium (NSEC)
Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA)
Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)
U.S. Decennial Census

WATERTOWN, MA

Date: 7/29/2025

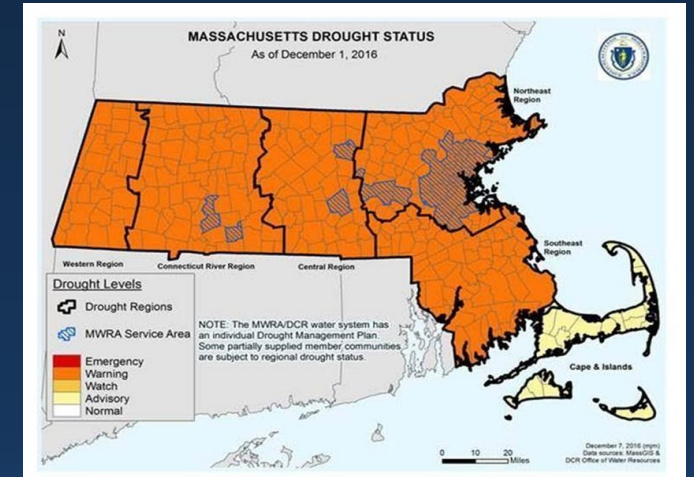
Other Natural Hazards

Extreme Heat

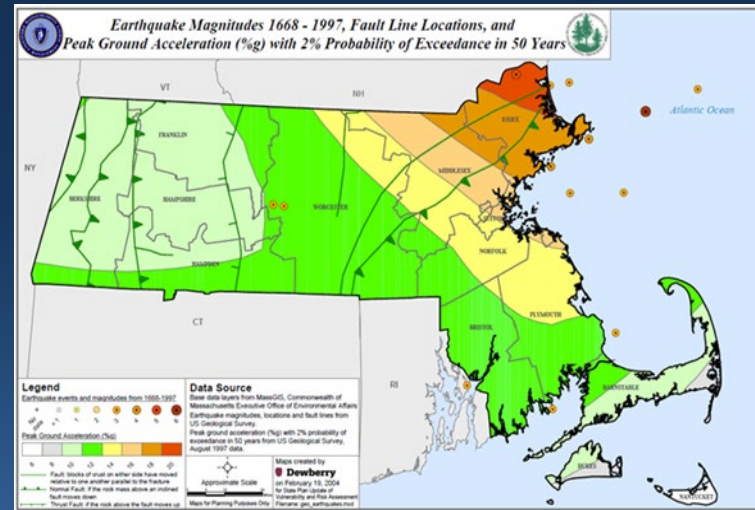
| | | Temperature (°F) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|----|------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| | | 80 | 82 | 84 | 86 | 88 | 90 | 92 | 94 | 96 | 98 | 100 | 102 | 104 | 106 | 108 | 110 |
| Relative Humidity (%) | 40 | 80 | 81 | 83 | 85 | 88 | 91 | 94 | 97 | 101 | 105 | 109 | 114 | 119 | 124 | 130 | 136 |
| | 45 | 80 | 82 | 84 | 87 | 89 | 93 | 96 | 100 | 104 | 109 | 114 | 119 | 124 | 130 | 137 | |
| | 50 | 81 | 83 | 85 | 88 | 91 | 95 | 99 | 103 | 108 | 113 | 118 | 124 | 131 | 137 | | |
| | 55 | 81 | 84 | 86 | 89 | 93 | 97 | 101 | 106 | 112 | 117 | 124 | 130 | 137 | | | |
| | 60 | 82 | 84 | 88 | 91 | 95 | 100 | 105 | 110 | 116 | 123 | 129 | 137 | | | | |
| | 65 | 82 | 85 | 89 | 93 | 98 | 103 | 108 | 114 | 121 | 128 | 136 | | | | | |
| | 70 | 83 | 86 | 90 | 95 | 100 | 105 | 112 | 119 | 126 | 134 | | | | | | |
| | 75 | 84 | 88 | 92 | 97 | 103 | 109 | 116 | 124 | 132 | | | | | | | |
| | 80 | 84 | 89 | 94 | 100 | 106 | 113 | 121 | 129 | | | | | | | | |
| | 85 | 85 | 90 | 96 | 102 | 110 | 117 | 125 | 135 | | | | | | | | |
| 90 | 86 | 91 | 98 | 105 | 113 | 122 | 131 | | | | | | | | | | |
| 95 | 86 | 93 | 100 | 108 | 117 | 127 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 100 | 87 | 95 | 103 | 112 | 121 | 132 | | | | | | | | | | | |

| Category | Heat Index | Health Hazards |
|-----------------|-----------------|--|
| Extreme Danger | 130 °F – Higher | Heat Stroke or Sunstroke is likely with continued exposure. |
| Danger | 105 °F – 129 °F | Sunstroke, muscle cramps, and/or heat exhaustion possible with prolonged exposure and/or physical activity. |
| Extreme Caution | 90 °F – 105 °F | Sunstroke, muscle cramps, and/or heat exhaustions possible with prolonged exposure and/or physical activity. |
| Caution | 80 °F – 90 °F | Fatigue possible with prolonged exposure and/or physical activity. |

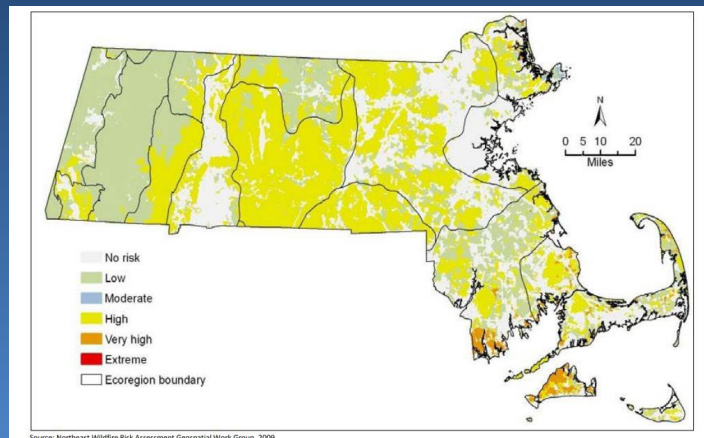
Drought



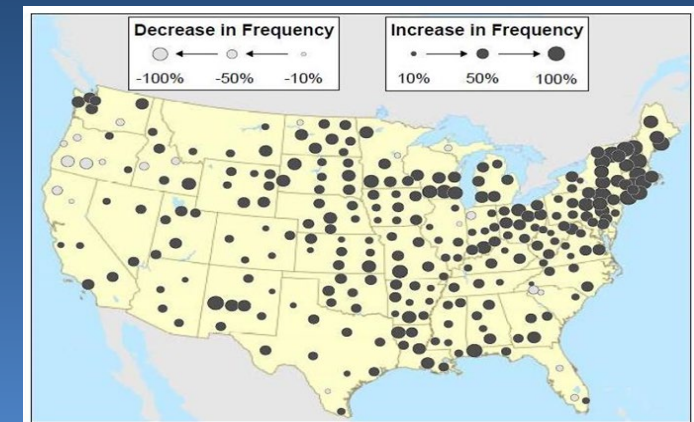
Earthquakes



Wildfires



Extreme Precipitation



Wind & Winter Hazards: Nor'easters/Blizzards

| Storm Event | Date |
|--|-----------------------|
| Severe Winter Storm and Snowstorm | March 2018 |
| Severe Winter Storm, Snowstorm, Flooding | January 2015 |
| Severe Winter Storm, Snowstorm, Flooding | February 2013 |
| Hurricane Sandy | October/November 2012 |



What We've Heard: Examples of Existing Mitigation Measures

Multiple Hazard Mitigation:

Comp. Emergency Management Plan (CEMP)

Flood Mitigation:

- Catch Basin Cleaning
- Participation in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP)
- Drainage system maintenance
- Wetlands Protection
- Open Space Residential Design (OSRD)
- Street Sweeping

Brush Fire Mitigation:

- Outdoor burning prohibited

Winter Hazard Mitigation:

- DPW conducts standard snow operations.

Wind Mitigation:

- Tree Maintenance Program
- MA State Building Code

Next Steps

Next Steps for Developing the Plan

1. 4th Local Team Meeting – Finalize Mitigation Strategy (January)
2. 2nd Public Meeting – Present Draft Plan, public comments (March)
3. Finalize Plan – submit it to MEMA & FEMA (April)
4. City Adoption of Final Plan

After FEMA approval of the plan, Watertown will be eligible for FEMA grants for hazard mitigation projects

We want to hear from you: please take our brief survey!

We are interested in:

- 1. What hazards you are most concerned about***
- 2. How hazards have impacted you***
- 3. What mitigation you would like to see the City consider***

Scan the survey QR code here:



Thank You!

Questions and Comments may be sent to:

Martin Pillsbury and Jenifer Wallitsch

MAPC

WatertownResilience@mapc.org

Survey:



City of Watertown Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP) Update Public Survey

The City of Watertown experiences natural hazard impacts including flooding and increasingly frequent and severe storms. To prepare for these hazards, the Town was awarded funding from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to update the 2019 Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP). By completing this project, the City will be eligible to apply for federal FEMA grants to support the implementation of hazard mitigation projects

We want to hear from you! This survey will take approximately 10 minutes to complete, and will close on January 31st, 2026.

Thank you for your participation.

What is your connection to the City? Please select all that apply.

- I own a home in Watertown
- I rent an apartment in Watertown
- I work in Watertown
- I own a business in Watertown
- I often visit Watertown
- Other (please specify below)

What brought you to this survey?

I heard about the survey during the public meeting in December

I read about the survey on the City website.

I learned about the survey in an email.

Other (please specify below)

What natural hazards are you most concerned about? Please rank the following options from most concerning (top of the list) to least concerning (bottom of the list).

Flooding

⋮

Drought

⋮

Extreme heat

⋮

Extreme wind events

⋮

Winter weather

⋮

Fire

⋮

How have these hazards impacted you? Stories might include flooding near your home or wind events that downed trees.

Which hazard mitigation strategies are most important to you? Please select your top three priorities.

- Modeling and data analysis to project future conditions in Watertown
- Public outreach, education, and engagement related to natural hazards
- Updating bylaws and regulations to incorporate resiliency considerations
- Designing resilient infrastructure such as roads, bridges, and buildings
- Designing resilient green infrastructure, nature-based solutions, and public open space
- Strategies that promote community resilience and support the City's most vulnerable residents
- Other (please specify below)

Is there anything else you want to share to help inform the Hazard Mitigation Plan update?

Thank you for contributing to the HMP update! Stay tuned for future updates!

Demographic Information (Optional)

We're collecting demographic information to ensure we are getting input from a representative cross section of the community. All of the questions below are optional and will not be identified to you.

What is your age?

18 or under

19 - 34

35 - 49

50 - 64

65 - 74

75 or older

What race or ethnicity do you identify as?

Black or African American

Asian

Hispanic or Latino

Native American or Alaska Native

Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander

Middle Eastern, Arab, or North African

White

Other

What is your household income?

- Under \$15,000
- \$15,000 - \$34,999
- \$35,000 - \$74,999
- \$75,000 - \$99,999
- \$100,000 - \$149,999
- \$150,000 or more